

PROFESSIONAL MILITARY COMPTROLLER SCHOOL

IDEA PAPER

TITLE

Required Comptroller Career Program Changes

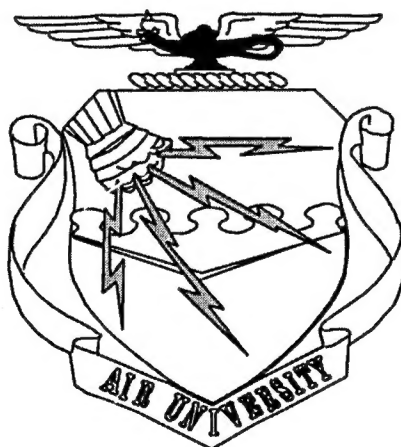
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PMCS IDEA PAPER

TITLE: REQUIRED COMPTROLLER CAREER PROGRAM CHANGES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Army civilian comptroller career program has undergone several changes the last decade. These changes have included the registration formats, appraisal formats and the introduction of a training education development system. Each change has sought to cure a specific problem and has left other areas untouched. Significant changes were introduced into the Army civilian comptroller career program by the establishment of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) and the capitalization of positions in the finance and accounting offices. The traditional career development paths for Army comptroller personnel have been altered. The systems existent for Army comptroller careerists to progress have also been adversely impacted, and changes are needed to protect the careerist. While Army careerists are told that the changes from the consolidation are transparent and will not have detrimental effects, there exists the reality that there is an attitude of "US" and "THEM." This must be overcome.

It is apparent that the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Financial Management, Proponency Office (SAFM-PO) has the responsibility to coordinate with DFAS or the Department of Defense (DOD) Comptroller to protect Army comptroller careerists who were not capitalized into DFAS. The coordination extends from the registration of careerists in the personnel referral systems to career development and training programs.

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INTRODUCTION

The intention of the DOD in establishing the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), its primary centers and operating sites was an improvement in the accounting and financial information reporting systems and practices. To accomplish this in the truest and fullest measure will require the integration of all aspects of the "system" to include the careerist. Responsibilities must be clearly defined, understood and agreed to by all to assure efficient operations. Toward achieving that goal, I address my comments in the topic areas that follow from the perspective of a present day Army civilian careerist.

DISCUSSION

STANDARDIZATION --

As we proceed along the lines of centralized finance and accounting services, we see that some systems are being abandoned in favor of others. The end result will be, hopefully, a single system capable of accounting for funds regardless of the "color," property, inventories and the cost of operations. This process of achieving a standard system has been forced upon us by the results of our own past actions. No matter what name is given to the reasons for the differences of the past, it is clear that the future is to be standardized to the maximum extent possible.

Given that standardization of accounting and finance services will occur, we must look at the people who will operate those systems and actually perform the functions of financial

management. Those people have always been known by terms related to their service affiliations. Military members have different titles based on the service to which they are assigned. Civilians also carry the Army, Navy or Air Force labels. As standardization occurs and practices become uniform across the board, so to must the perceptions of the civilian careerist become uniform. No more "US" and "THEM." All aspects must be equal, whether it is interaction between the services or between the services and DFAS.

UNIFORMITY OF TRAINING PLANS

With the consolidation of finance and accounting services under the auspices of DFAS, we find a new problem for management, the uniformity of training. Each individual service has sponsored training in their own right for years, but there have been differences in emphasis and course availability. It is clear that change is necessary to assure that a truly functional and compatible staff will continue to exist in the future. This will be even more important as we work our way down the road to a financial management system which is not service unique, but truly a DOD or "purple" system.

This "purple" system must be defined and built, or procured off the shelf and modified to accommodate governmental anomalies. Once it is selected as a DOD system for all, the training plans for all areas of financial management must be modified and standardized. No longer should we have a school of resource management that is operated by and for a single service

component. Changing philosophies in this area will not be easy. No one readily yields such turf. We have an example of a school with a multi-service orientation which has functioned well for some time, the Professional Military Comptroller School (PMCS).

Emulating the success of PMCS, the several services should investigate the option of combining their offerings. Ever dwindling resources within each service coupled with the moves toward centralization and standardization as mandated by Congress makes this approach the only viable option for future financial management training. Future federal budgets will be pressed even more to reduce the cost of the military and its operations. We will be required to do even more as an establishment with less. We should make the effort to accomplish that by demonstration rather than rhetoric using financial management training as a model of how to do the job right.

ARMY CAREERISTS ROTATIONAL BASE

Army careerists have seen several changes in their career referral system. The objective of these changes was improvement in the referral system and the quality of candidates provided to fill vacancies. These changes required all careerists to submit lengthy documentation packages detailing their careers and their accomplishments. Supervisors were/are required to evaluate and rate the careerists based on these written claims. In some instances, the supervisors have no direct knowledge of either the careerist or the validity of the accomplishment claim. They

are then forced to either make no rating or evaluate what is submitted for their review. Herein lies a huge potential for shortchanging a careerist.

The careerist who receives no rating from a supervisor must rely on their own single rating inputs. For the honest, modest, or shy careerist who is not given to making fantastic claims, the single input leaves them with lower element ratings than other careerists with supervisory inputs. There is also no method known to eliminate the subjectivity of personalities and personal relationships between careerists and their supervisors in this system. Relationships between the careerist and the supervisor which derive from other than the working environment may be manifested in the rating of job performance. Such ratings have a great potential for invalidating the entire system.

Removal of such personal biases, regardless of the source, should be the goal of any rating and referral system. Toward this end, the career referral system(s) should rely on input from the careerist which details the duties of their position and a factual account of their performance of those duties. The latest three performance appraisals should be required to accompany any such input to document performance claims. If they are objectively written, they will provide a better assessment of the careerist than the evaluation of certain specific claims of performance or capability which might cover only a small portion of the overall performance of a careerist. Additionally, the new civilian appraisal system for Army

civilians includes a profile of the rater which will help in identification of rating biases.

The capitalization of personnel in finance and accounting offices into DFAS has left the Army with a small number of Army accountants. Many of the remaining positions are overseas and not all of those personnel have a "base" or position to which they may return in the continental United States (CONUS). By way of either choice or chance they are being limited in the future in terms of where they might find their next CONUS position. They need opportunities to relocate where CHOICES exist.

The Army has announced a program to fund moves of careerists called JOB SWAP. This program funds the relocation of careerists who wish to exchange positions. Excluded, however, are careerists located outside of CONUS (OCONUS). I feel that this is unfair treatment. The OCONUS careerist is being denied the opportunity to develop his/her career and skills through the selective reassignment possibilities of this program. The operating commands at both ends of the exchange are being denied the benefit of having someone added to their organizations who comes with current, first-hand knowledge of the operations at the other end of the spectrum. One can only appreciate and enhance their own environment through such an exchange. The cost of moving personnel involved in an OCONUS exchange is borne by the OCONUS command, thus there is no financial impact for the program proponent as there is with CONUS only exchanges. Hence, this type of exchange should be

favorably considered by SAFM-PO.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CAREER REFERRAL SYSTEM (FMREFER)

The DFAS has established a system in which financial management personnel may register for referral in filling vacancies. The intention is to provide the DFAS careerist with advancement potential similar to that available to careerists in the several military departments. The system is currently restricted for input to current DFAS employees. Careerists from other services whose positions were not capitalized are being excluded from registration until an as yet unspecified date in 1995.

The results of the establishment of this system are clear. Once again within the DOD we have needlessly recreated the wheel. We are excluding careerists from consideration in filling vacancies because of a desire to protect DFAS personnel. There was a limited announcement of the new system. Some Army careerists learned of FMREFER only through personal contact with DFAS personnel with "inside" information.

FMREFER should be uploaded with the files of the careerists presently enrolled in service-level systems. Any data which may be needed to complete the FMREFER record could be requested from the careerist separately. The careerist could also decline the opportunity, thereby taking responsibility for any future exclusions from referral considerations. Civilian personnel rules notwithstanding on transfers of personnel with functions, the DFAS community would be afforded its best opportunity to

match personnel to positions by expanding its base in FMREFER.

CONCLUSION

The entire area of civilian career management is being reshaped as a result of actions taken to implement the will of Congress. No longer are civilians in financial management and finance and accounting going to be the sole assets of the several military departments. Service-unique practices must change to reflect this centralization and standardization effort. These changes must include every aspect of the careers of financial management personnel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper should be sent jointly to the DOD Comptroller and to SAFM-PO to accomplish the following:

- a. Obtain an overview of the current personnel management, training and career program practices and policies within DOD and the several military departments.
- b. Establish a DOD level referral system for resource management careerists.
- c. Identify standard training plans for DOD resource management careerists.
- d. Expand where necessary the eligibility for schools such as the Army Management Staff College to include other services and modify the teaching plans to expand the applicability to more than just the Army community.
- e. Promote the philosophy that resource management is a function that is a team effort.

f. Demonstrate that all of DOD is working to accomplish the mandate of accountability as set forth by the Congress and the founding fathers.